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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1. Mideast](#)
- [2. Proposed Russia-Syria Arms Deal](#)
- [3. Stanley Fischer's Bank of Israel Nomination](#)

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media reported that six Israeli civilians were killed and five others were wounded in a combined double suicide attack at the Karni Crossing at the border with the Gaza Strip, the vital channel for trade between Israel and the Strip. The attackers first blew up the separation wall between the Palestinian and Israeli sides of the passage. Hamas, the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) claimed joint responsibility for the operation, which was allegedly carried out in response to Israel's killing of a West Bank militant and other Palestinians in recent days. Yediot quoted associates of PM Sharon as saying that the attack is a "warning bell" to recently elected PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) that if he does not wake up in the face of terror, he will fail. Yediot further quoted them as saying: "If the Palestinians will not take any steps against terror, it will be impossible to make any progress." Maariv writes that the attack was Hamas's "resounding response" to Abbas, who has in recent days delivered unambiguous messages to the Palestinian organizations, demanding that they stop attacks against Israel.

Israel Radio reported that this morning, at a high-level meeting, Sharon decided to close all crossing points with the Gaza Strip until the Palestinians take relevant measures. Writing before Thursday night's attack, Ha'aretz reported that the IDF is disappointed with Abbas's attitude toward the militant Palestinian organizations.

In a feature story by its Washington correspondent on the life and politics of secretary of state-designate Condoleezza Rice, Jerusalem Post quoted one official with an American Jewish organization as saying that she is expected to maintain her special relationship with Israeli officials.

Leading media reported that on Thursday, PM Sharon held a special high-level debate on enforcing the law during the Gaza pullout, both in cases of soldiers refusing to obey orders and in instance of violence toward the security forces during the evacuation of illegal outposts. Israel Radio quoted Sharon as saying that the various enforcement branches of the GOI are not yet ready for the withdrawal. Ha'aretz reported that settlement rabbis have been warning in recent days against giving a literal interpretation to a speech about civil war made 31 years ago by the late Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Hachohen Kook, who is considered the spiritual father of the settlement movement. Leading media reported that Ami Ayalon, the co-initiator of the Peoples' Voice petition and a new member of the Labor Party, discussed the phenomena of disobedience and violence with settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein on Thursday. Hatzofe quoted Ayalon as saying that "empathy and dialogue" with the settlers are missing in the government's approach to disengagement.

Leading media quoted FM Silvan Shalom on Thursday that Jerusalem has asked Moscow not to go through with a sale of sophisticated weapons to Syria. Shalom's

statement was the first public GOI acknowledgement of the deal. Ha'aretz reported that Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov and U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld agreed Thursday on the details of a treaty limiting the sale of mobile ground-to-air missiles. Ha'aretz quoted Ivanov as saying that he had not heard an explicit request not to sell missiles to Syria from his American interlocutors. Leading media reported that on Thursday, Russia and Syria blamed Israel for the crisis over the planned weapons deal.

Jerusalem Post reported that Sharon told visiting EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana on Thursday that Israel is willing to move directly from the disengagement plan into implementation of the road map if the PA fulfills its commitments to fight terror.

Leading media reported that on Thursday, Sharon and Vice Premier Shimon Peres agreed that Peres would be entrusted with concentrating international efforts to develop the Gaza Strip's economy after Israel's pullout. Maariv reported that Peres asked Sharon not to include the Shas party in his coalition before it supports the disengagement plan. Maariv cited the response of Sharon associates that the government would not be able to survive without Shas.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post reported that on Thursday, the High Court of Justice ordered a halt to construction of large sections of the West Bank separation fence between Jerusalem and Maccabim after a petition was filed by Palestinian villagers.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz reported that, in its annual report released on Thursday, Human Rights Watch said that human rights conditions remained grave in Iraq and Israel, and have shown little improvement.

All media reported that former Yahad (Meretz) party leader Yossi Sarid, who abstained at the Knesset vote that endorsed Sharon's new government on Monday, and party leader Yossi Beilin sharply squabbled at the party's convention on Thursday. Ha'aretz (English Ed.) quoted Larry Garber, former USAID mission director for Gaza and the West Bank, an international monitor who has overseen some 25 elections around the world, as saying: "The PA elections were the best organized and most professional I have ever seen." The newspaper also reported that members of the Palestinian-American community celebrated this week's elections with guarded optimism, as they marked an important democratic process that they said was particularly significant to their dual identity.

Prof. Shai Feldman, the outgoing director of Tel Aviv University's Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that Iran is not an "adventurous adversary," that "it would not be prepared to sacrifice one third of its population on the altar of a nuclear conflict," and that Israel has the capability to produce deterrence against a nuclear Iran in the future. Feldman also said that if Iran has nuclear weapons, Egypt and Saudi Arabia will also aspire to nuclear capability.

Jerusalem Post cited a petition filed Thursday with the High Court of Justice by Arie King, a far Right activist, according to which the Arab chairman of a committee that serves as an intermediary between police and East Jerusalem residents is selling burial plots to Muslims in an area classified by the state as an archeological site and national park.

Ha'aretz cited figures released by Nefesh B'Nefesh, which together with the Jewish Agency facilitates almost all American immigration to Israel, as saying that less than 4 percent of American immigrants to Israel last year settled over the Green Line.

A Ha'aretz/Dialogue poll found that Sharon's "disengagement government" enjoys the support of the majority of voters. However, the poll also shows that while 38.3 percent of the public supports implementation of the disengagement plan, 37.5 percent back a referendum, and 17.1 percent want new elections. 7.1 percent are undecided.

The poll, taken following the formation of the new government, shows that were elections to be held now, Shinui would lose four of its 15 seats in the Knesset, while Yahad would strengthen from six to eight MKs. The Likud would lose three of its 40 MKs and the Labor Party's political strength would remain unchanged at 19 seats in parliament.

A Maariv/Teleseker poll:

-"In view of the latest developments, do you believe

that Sharon will eventually succeed in evacuating the settlements in the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank?" Yes: 69 percent; no: 28 percent.  
-"Do you believe that Israel should help Abu Mazen establish his status by making a gesture such as facilitating passage at roadblocks and the release of security prisoners?" Israel should make such a gesture when Abu Mazen acts to prevent terror: 59 percent; Israel should not make such a gesture: 23 percent; Israel should make such a gesture: 17 percent.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Regional correspondent Ronni Shaked wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Abu Mazen cannot go to a meeting with Sharon now, and cannot look Israel in the eye, unless he can prove that he, the new 'rais,' is implementing his statements about disarming and halting terror."

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "The Bush administration, as far as the Europeans are concerned, will be tested by its measure of involvement in resolving the bloody conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians."

Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "What if the doomsday scenarios we hear on a daily basis, arguing that Israel is about to be overrun by the Arab womb, are ... part of an ingenious Palestinian plan to psychologically manipulate Israel into capitulating?"

Block Quotes:  
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I. "Abu Mazen's Test"

Regional correspondent Ronni Shaked wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 14): "Abu Mazen is highly embarrassed. On Thursday, he was dealt the first blow below the belt, and from his own men -- the members of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. This is a particularly painful blow, since in recent days he has been holding talks with Hamas in an attempt to secure a cease-fire, and those acting against him are his own people. Abu Mazen cannot go to a meeting with Sharon now, and cannot look Israel in the eye, unless he can prove that he, the new 'rais,' is implementing his statements about disarming and halting terror.... He has no choice: He must act immediately.... If he does not act immediately, he will lose all the confidence that top Israeli officials have in him -- not only on the part of the Prime Minister, but also in the Israeli public, which has pinned its hopes on him. If he does not act, he will undermine his standing in the U.S., and here too, it will ultimately hurt the Palestinians themselves. The terror attack at the Karni crossing is also a severe blow to Gaza's economy.... The Palestinians in Gaza must understand this time that terror is a double-edged sword, and the suffering will be theirs."

II. "New 'Rais,' Old Operating Disk"

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in Yediot Aharonot (January 14): "The Israeli side continues to absorb terror attacks.... 'The old Arik Sharon,' says a senior aide in the Prime Minister's bureau, 'would have already aimed threats at the Palestinian Authority. The new Arik holds back.... Sharon is careful not to make threats at the present time. He does not want to spoil the optimistic atmosphere. On Thursday, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana came to Ramallah and Jerusalem. Solana wanted to be the first statesman to meet with Abu Mazen after his victory in the elections. The Europeans believe the arrangement between Israel and the Palestinians to be the most acute issue in the region -- even more than ending the war in Iraq. They intend to place the matter at the top of their agenda [in their talks with] the Americans. The Bush administration, as far as the Europeans are concerned, will be tested by its measure of involvement in resolving the bloody conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.... More or less, what has been is what will continue to be: the Palestinians, with European backing, will apply pressure to launch negotiations on the comprehensive, final status arrangement; whereas the Israeli side will continue its preparations for evacuating the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria, and no more."

### III. "The Demographic Bomb Is a Dud"

Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (January 14): "While terrorism is the outward face of the post-modern aggressor, social psychology is perhaps his greatest weapon. If the target population can be manipulated to view itself as the aggressor, if it can be brought to view its position as untenable, then it will sue for peace and surrender.... What if the doomsday scenarios we hear on a daily basis, arguing that Israel is about to be overrun by the Arab womb, are all based on fraudulent data -- part of an ingenious Palestinian plan to psychologically manipulate Israel into capitulating? This week a team of American and Israeli researchers presented a study of the Palestinian population statistics at the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation in Washington.... All of the team's comparative analyses led to the conclusion that the Palestinian population forecasts upon which Israel is basing its current policy of withdrawal and uprooting of Israeli communities in the territories are faulty in the extreme."

#### 12. Proposed Russia-Syria Arms Deal:

##### Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Israel must act to solve the crisis in close cooperation with the Americans.... [But] neglecting [the diplomatic channel with Syria] ... is liable to turn out to be a double-edged sword."

##### Block Quotes:

##### "Strained Relations With Russia"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (January 14): "It seems that the Russian-Syrian rapprochement is directed mainly at the Americans and the Europeans, who recently worked together against the Kremlin's candidate for the Ukrainian presidency. Israel found itself involved in this wrestling match, to its detriment.... Political figures in Jerusalem made it clear that in its attempt to prevent the arms deal, Israel will be careful not to ruin relations with Moscow. This approach is justified mainly because of the importance of ties with Russia. Israel must act to solve the crisis in close cooperation with the Americans -- who are afraid that the Russian weapons to be sold to Syria will fall into the hands of hostile elements in Iraq. In addition, Israel should look into the nature of the Syrian channel. Neglecting it -- one reason being the groundless claim that there is no point in negotiating with a weak partner -- is liable to turn out to be a double-edged sword."

#### 13. Stanley Fischer's Bank of Israel Nomination:

##### Summary:

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker "advised" Bank of Israel governor-designate Stanley Fischer in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Your glory as a leading international economist won't allow you to hide behind the walls of the Bank of Israel.... [Nonetheless,] feel at home ... this is your home as well as mine."

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Israeli society and Israeli democracy are not capable of bearing the moral costs of this unacceptable postmodern appointment."

##### Block Quotes:

#### 1I. "Advice to a New Immigrant"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker "advised" Bank of Israel governor-designate Stanley Fischer in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (January 14): "Shortly after you successfully go through immigration procedures, arrange a meeting with the chairman of the Histadrut labor federation. He is the second most important person in Israel's economy. You'll see how much you'll need his quiet support.... The percentage of Israelis living in

poverty is the highest one in the Western world -- twice of that in America.... Your glory as a leading international economist won't allow you to hide behind the walls of the Bank of Israel and to claim that your only interest is monetary policy management and banking supervision. More, much more is required of you.... Break with the treasury. The Finance Ministry under Binyamin Netanyahu has accumulated a huge power.... Relinquish American citizenship -- neither immediately, nor with a suspicious delay.... Don't take everything to heart. Rough, strident Israelis are only immigrants or children or grandchildren of immigrants. Feel at home, Stanley Fischer, this is your home as well as mine."

## II. "A Postmodern Governor"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (January 14): "With all due respect to [Bank of Israel governor-designate Stanley] Fischer, he has not been a partner to our destiny until now. The vice president of Citigroup accompanied us from Wall Street, and empathized with us from Wall Street, but did not take an active part in our lives. He was not with us during our military service. He was not with us during the trials of Israeli civilian life. He was not with us during our aliyah (immigration) or our absorption of aliyah. Not in peace and not in war. Not in the sweat of reserve duty, and not in the exasperation of trying to obtain a mortgage. Therefore, in the most profound sense, the man who was a candidate for the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank is not part of our glory. Nor can he become one of the leaders of our community overnight.... It's true that the Israeli economy is likely to profit from Fischer's appointment. But Israeli society and Israeli democracy are not capable of bearing the moral costs of this unacceptable postmodern appointment."

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